

Subchapter 9. Awarding Contracts for State Assisted Projects to Small Business Concerns Owned and Controlled by Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individuals

7:22-9.1 Scope and purpose

(a) This subchapter establishes procedures for providing opportunities for socially and economically disadvantaged ("SED") contractors and vendors to supply materials and services under State financed construction contracts for environmental infrastructure facilities. To implement the policies established in N.J.S.A. 58:11B-26, 40:11A-41 et seq., and 52:32-17 et seq., this subchapter applies to environmental infrastructure projects receiving financial assistance from the Department and the Trust pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:22-3, 4 and 6 and 7:22A-6 and 7. Under the provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:22-3, 4 and 6 and 7:22A-6 and 7, the Department and the Trust require recipients of Trust and Fund loans and other assistance to establish such programs for socially and economically disadvantaged small business concerns, to designate a project compliance officer, and to submit to the Department and Trust procurement plans for implementing the SED program. In addition, N.J.A.C. 7:22-3.17(a)24, 4.17(a)24, 6.17(a)24 and 7:22A-2.4(a) provide that a goal of not less than 10 percent be established for the award of contracts to small business concerns owned and controlled by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. The goal of 10 percent applies to the total amount of all contracts for building, materials and equipment, or services (including planning, design and building related activities) for a construction project. Where a local government unit has a SED participation goal which exceeds 10 percent of the total amount of all contracts, the local government unit must comply with both the Department's rules and the local minority and women-owned business ordinances.

(b) This subchapter also establishes the standards and procedures that will apply to the contracting agencies of grant or loan recipients in the awarding and making of contracts under their SED programs.

7:22-9.2 Definitions

The following words and terms, as used in this subchapter, will have the following meanings unless the content clearly indicates otherwise.

"Building" means the acquisition, erection, alteration, remodeling, improvement or extension of an environmental infrastructure facility.

"Construction" includes, but is not limited to:

1. The preliminary planning to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of environmental infrastructure facilities, the engineering, architectural, legal, fiscal, and economic investigations and studies, surveys, design, plans, working drawings, specifications, procedures, and other action necessary for the construction of environmental infrastructure facilities;

2. The building of, or purchase of land for, environmental infrastructure facilities; and

3. The inspection and supervision of the building of environmental infrastructure facilities.

"Contract" means any written agreement with a professional service or construction contractor related to the construction of an environmental infrastructure project.

"Contracting agency" means:

1. The governing body of a local government unit or any department, branch, board, commission, committee, authority, agency or officer of such local government unit possessing the authority to award and make contracts; or

2. The owner(s) or authorized representative(s) of a private entity.

"Contractor" means any party entering into a contract to provide or offering to provide building, materials and equipment, or services to a project sponsor for the construction of environmental infrastructure facilities. This includes, but is not limited to, planning and design, as well as building related services such as engineering, inspection and accounting.

"Contractor's plan" means the SED utilization plan submitted by the contractor to the project sponsor and to the Department establishing subcontracting opportunities that will fulfill the requirements of this subchapter.

"Department" means the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and its successors and assigns.

"Environmental infrastructure facilities" means wastewater treatment facilities, stormwater management facilities or water supply facilities.

"Financial agreement" means the legal instrument, including a grant agreement or loan agreement, executed between either the State of New Jersey or the Trust and the project sponsor for the construction of environmental infrastructure facilities.

"Local government unit" means a county, municipality, municipal or county sewerage or utility authority, municipal sewerage district, joint meeting, improvement authority or other political subdivision of the State authorized to construct, operate and maintain wastewater treatment or stormwater management facilities, or a State authority, district water supply commission, county, municipality, municipal or county utilities authority, municipal water district, joint meeting or any other political subdivision of the State authorized pursuant to law to operate or maintain a public water supply system or to construct, rehabilitate, operate or maintain water supply facilities or otherwise provide water for human consumption.

"New Jersey environmental infrastructure financing program" means the program for providing financing to project sponsors pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:22-3, 4 and 6, and 7:22A-6 and 7.

"Office" means the Office of Equal Opportunity, Public Contract Assistance and Environmental Equity or other program of the Department of Environmental Protection with the responsibility for administration of this subchapter.

"Private entity" means the owner(s) of a nongovernmental community water system or a nonprofit noncommunity water system.

"Project" means the defined services for the construction of specified operable environmental infrastructure facilities as approved by the Department or the Trust in the project sponsor's financial agreement.

"Project compliance officer" means an officer or employee of the project sponsor who is designated by the project sponsor to monitor and enforce compliance with the affirmative action and SED requirements of the applicable program rules and this subchapter.

"Project plan" means the proposal submitted at the time of application by the project sponsor to the Department establishing the SED utilization plan and its requirements.

"Project sponsor" means any local government unit or private entity that seeks a loan or grant pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:22-3, 4 and 6 and 7:22A -6 and 7.

"SED utilization plan" means a written document outlining the entire project work, the estimated length of time it will take to complete the project, each significant segment of the project on which SEDs will or may participate, and a description of how SEDs will be contacted.

"Set-aside contract" means:

1. A contract for building, materials and equipment, or services, which is designated as a contract for which bids are solicited on a restricted basis such that responses will be accepted only from qualified small business enterprises owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; or

2. A portion of a contract when that portion has been so designated; or

3. Any other purchase or procurement so designated.

"Socially and economically disadvantaged small business concern" or "SED" means any small business concern:

1. Which is at least 51 percent owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; or, in the case of a publicly owned business, at least 51 percent of the stock of which is owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; or, in the case of a joint venture, at least 51 percent of the beneficial ownership interests are legitimately held by a SED; and

2. Whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; and

3. Which is a full participation subcontractor in that the SED is responsible for the execution of a distinct element of work and carries out the work responsibility by actually performing, managing and supervising the task involved. Any deviation from this definition will automatically classify the SED as a broker, middleman or passive conduit. These three functions are contrary to the spirit of the Trust Act and will not qualify a SED enterprise for State of New Jersey certification; and

4. Which has been certified pursuant to the New Jersey Uniform Certification Act (N.J.S.A. 52:27H-1 et seq.) or pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR Part 23 by the New Jersey Department of Commerce and Economic Development, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the New Jersey Transit or other agencies deemed appropriate by the Office, as an eligible minority business or female business.

i. "Socially disadvantaged individuals" means those individuals who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identity as a member of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

ii. "Economically disadvantaged individuals" means those socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the same business area who are not socially disadvantaged.

iii. "Socially and economically disadvantaged individuals" shall include women, Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and members of other groups, or other individuals, found to be socially and economically disadvantaged by the Small Business Administration under Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act, as amended (15 USC 637(a)). Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans shall be defined as follows:

(1) "Black American" means a person having origins in any of the black racial groups in Africa;

(2) "Hispanic American" means a person of Spanish or Portuguese culture, with origins in Mexico, South or Central America, or the Caribbean Islands, regardless of race;

(3) "Asian American" means a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, Indian Subcontinent, Hawaii, or the Pacific Islands;

(4) "Native American" means a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America.

"Small business concern" means a business which is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation. A business is independently owned and operated if the management which controls the business is responsible for both its daily and long term operations.

"Subcontract" means an agreement to perform a portion of a contract.

"Subcontractor" means a third party that is engaged by the contractor to perform part of the work under a subcontract.

"Trust" means the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust established pursuant to the Trust Act.

"Trust Act" means the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust Act (N.J.S.A. 58:11B-1 et seq., as amended and/or supplemented.

"10 percent SED utilization," "10 percent goal" and "10 percent" means SED business concern participation, which includes 7 percent for minority-owned SED business concerns and 3 percent for women-owned SED business concerns.

7:22-9.3 SED utilization requirements for projects

(a) A goal of not less than 10 percent (or a higher percentage as may be required by Federal law) of the total amount of all contracts for building, materials and equipment, or services for a project funded by a New Jersey environmental infrastructure facilities financing program must be awarded to SEDs.

(b) The 10 percent SED utilization requirement shall be accomplished by the following:

1. Bids may be solicited on a restricted basis by setting aside a contract or subcontract for building, materials and equipment, or services. Once so designated, bids on a set aside contract shall be invited and accepted only from SEDs; or

2. Bids may be solicited on an unrestricted basis and not designated a set-aside contract. The bid documents, however, shall include a statement to the effect that the successful bidder must fulfill the SED utilization requirements by subcontracting portions or the work to SEDs; or

3. Contractors also have the option of establishing set-aside or unrestricted bidding procedures, or both, to fulfill the 10 percent SED utilization requirement for the project.

7:22-9.4 Requirement to develop SED Utilization Plan

(a) Each project sponsor shall develop, in consultation with the Office, a plan for achieving its SED utilization requirements (the "project plan"). Development of a plan shall be completed before the Department and, when relevant, the Trust may approve an application pursuant to the applicable program rules

(b) The project plan shall identify those contracts proposed to be bid on a restricted (that is, a set aside contract) or on an unrestricted basis, or both. For each unrestricted contract the project plan shall also identify the SED utilization requirements that the successful bidder shall meet.

(c) All contractors, including SED contractors, shall submit their own SED utilization plan ("contractor's plan"), for the aspects of the project covered by the contract, to the project sponsor and to the Office within 30 days of the awarding of a contract. The Contractor's Plan shall contain provisions to meet the specific SED utilization requirements imposed upon the contractor by the project sponsor as well as to

meet the general SED utilization requirements for the project pursuant to this subchapter.

(d) If the contractor does not comply with the requirements of the contractor's plan and the project sponsor does not take steps to otherwise comply with N.J.A.C. 7:22-9.3(a), the Department and, in the case of a Trust loan, the Trust, may take any of the actions or combinations thereof specified in N.J.A.C. 7:22-3.40 through 3.44, 7:22-4.40 through 4.44, 7:22-6.40 through 6.44 and 7:22A-1.8 through 1.13.

(e) Project sponsors, contractors, and the Office shall consider factors similar to those set forth in N.J.A.C. 17:12-6.11 implementing the State Set-Aside Act when developing SED utilization plans.

7:22-9.5 Bidding for contracts or subcontracts through set-asides

(a) The 10 percent SED utilization requirement established by N.J.A.C. 7:22-9.3(a) may be attained by requiring that a contract or a subcontract shall be set aside for bidding only by qualified small businesses owned or controlled by socially or economically disadvantaged individuals ("SEDs") whenever there is a reasonable expectation that at least two bids will be obtained from such enterprises at a fair and reasonable price. A fair and reasonable price will be determined by comparison to other estimates received for the same work.

(b) Designation of set aside contracts shall be made prior to any notice and advertisement for bids. Once designated, the notices and advertisements for bids shall indicate that the contract or subcontract to be awarded is a set aside for qualified small businesses owned or controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals ("SEDs").

(c) The provisions of (a) above and 7:22-9.8(a) requiring at least two bids to be obtained from qualified SEDs shall not apply to set-aside contracts for professional services and extraordinary unspecifiable services pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5(1)(a)(i) and (ii), in which case a contract may be awarded to a qualified SED pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5(1)(a)(i) or (ii).

7:22-9.6 Notice of SED utilization opportunities

(a) All project sponsors, at least 30 days prior to public advertisement for bids, shall notify the agencies specified in N.J.A.C. 7:22-9.13(a)8, of the availability of opportunities for SEDs to provide services, to bid on set aside construction contracts or subcontracts, to bid on unrestricted contracts or subcontracts, or to provide any other necessary purchase or procurement. The notice shall include a description of the type and scope of the services involved.

(b) All notices shall include a statement to the effect that the project or contract is funded in part by New Jersey wastewater treatment financing programs and the successful bidder must comply with all the provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:22-9.1 et seq. for the participation of small business enterprises owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

7:22-9.7 Advertisements for SED utilization

(a) All advertisements for bids shall include a statement to the effect that the project or contract is funded in part by New Jersey environmental infrastructure financing programs and the successful bidder must comply with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:22-9 for the participation of small business enterprises owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

(b) The advertisement for bids shall indicate that the invitation to bid is on:

1. A set-aside contract or subcontract and that awards will be made only to small business concerns that are certified by the New Jersey Department of Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the New Jersey Transit or other agencies deemed appropriate by the Office as eligible minority businesses or female businesses; or

2. An unrestricted basis whereby the successful bidder must fulfill the SED utilization requirements. The agencies specified in N.J.A.C. 7:22-9.13(a)8 will have a list of eligible SED firms and shall, upon request, provide them to the project sponsor. The project sponsor shall, during the advertisement phase, provide copies of the list to all contractors bidding on unrestricted contracts.

(c) The advertisement for bids shall be in such newspaper or newspapers and other periodicals identified by the agencies specified in N.J.A.C. 7:22-9.13 as will best give notice thereof to appropriate bidders and shall be sufficiently in advance of the purchase or contract to promote competitive bidding. In no case shall the advertisement for bids be published less than 30 days prior to the date fixed for receiving bids on the purchase or contract.

(d) In the case of a set aside contract, the newspaper or newspapers in which the advertisement for bids appears shall be selected by the contracting agency in consultation with the Office.

(e) If there are no responses to the bid solicitation from SEDs or if the successful bidder's proposal does not meet the SED utilization requirements, the successful bidder shall advertise and continue the search for SED participants for a minimum of 30 days after the contract is awarded. The contract shall include a provision to this effect.

7:22-9.8 Cancellation of set-aside designation

If, in consultation with the Office, the contracting agency determines that two bids from the appropriate qualified business enterprises cannot be obtained, the contracting agency may withdraw the designation of the set-aside contracts and resolicit bids on an unrestricted basis. The cancelled designation shall not be considered in determining the percentage of the total amount of contracts for a project awarded to SEDs. The project plan shall be modified accordingly.

7:22-9.9 Acceptance of set-aside bids

When a contract or portion thereof has been designated as a set-aside, or when the contractor is required to subcontract a portion of a contract to qualified SEDs, acceptance of set-aside bids shall be confined to small business concerns that are certified as a SED.

7:22-9.10 Lowest bid resulting in payment of unreasonable price

(a) If the contracting agency determines that the acceptance of the lowest responsible bid on a set-aside contract will result either in the payment of an unreasonable price or in a contract otherwise unacceptable pursuant to the statutes and rules governing public contracts, the contracting agency shall reject all bids.

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(b) Bidders and the office shall be notified of the rejection of all bids, the reasons for the rejection, and the contracting agency's intent to solicit bids for a second time on a set-aside contract.

(c) If the contracting agency determines a second time that the acceptance of the lowest responsible bid on a set-aside contract will result either in the payment of an unreasonable price or in a contract otherwise unacceptable pursuant to the statutes and rules governing public contracts, the contracting agency shall reject all bids and withdraw the designation of the set-aside contract, notify the Office and, after receipt of the Office's approval, shall amend the project plan accordingly.

(d) Bidders shall be notified of the set-aside cancellation, the reasons for the cancellation and the contracting agency's intent to resolicit bids on an unrestricted basis. SEDs may participate in the bidding on an unrestricted basis.

(e) The cancelled solicitation shall not be counted as a set aside for the purpose of obtaining the required 10 percent participation by small businesses owned or controlled by socially or economically disadvantaged individuals ("SEDs").

7:22-9.11 Project compliance officer

(a) Each project sponsor shall designate an officer or employee to serve as its project compliance officer.

(b) The project compliance officer shall be responsible for coordinating SED utilization efforts on the project and for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the affirmative action and SED requirements of the applicable program rules.

(c) SED utilization requirements shall be an agenda item at all contract award meetings and, wherever applicable, at preconstruction conference meetings regardless of whether a loan or grant agreement has been executed or not. Each project sponsor shall be responsible for notifying the Office of the time and place of such meetings.

(d) The project compliance officer shall attend all monthly construction progress meetings.

7:22-9.12 Reports

(a) The contracting agency shall submit its planning and design SED utilization report to the Office at the time of filing of its grant/loan application.

(b) Each project compliance officer shall submit the contracting agency's monthly progress reports to the Office. Once all SED contractors have been obtained, submittal of this report will no longer be required.

(c) Each project compliance officer shall submit a periodic report on behalf of the project sponsor to the Office according to a schedule announced by the Office. At a minimum, this construction report shall be submitted quarterly; that is, January, April, July and October. Where appropriate, the Office may approve a variation in the frequency of reporting requirements specified in (b) through (d) of this section. This report shall include the following information:

1. The value of each contract and subcontract awarded to SEDs and the total dollar value and number of contracts and subcontracts awarded to SEDs;

2. The percentage of SED utilization in comparison to the cost of each contract, as well as the total percentage of SED utilization (including set aside contracts) in comparison to overall project costs;

3. The types and sizes of the participating SEDs and the nature of goods and services being provided; and

4. The efforts made to publicize and promote the project sponsor's SED utilization plan.

(d) Contractors shall submit a quarterly construction report to the project sponsor and to the Office. The project compliance officer may be contacted for assistance if needed.

(e) The report forms required by (a) through (d) above shall be obtained from the Office.

(f) The project compliance officer shall submit reports or information in addition to what is required by (a) through (c) above when requested to do so by the Office.

(g) Failure to comply with the reporting requirements of (a) through (d) and (f) above may subject the project sponsor to the remedies for noncompliance with State and Trust loan or grant conditions specified in the applicable program rules.

7:22-9.13 Assessment of compliance

(a) Where the Office determines that a project sponsor has failed or is failing to meet the 10 percent SED utilization requirement, the project sponsor shall, upon the written request of the Office, submit the following:

1. Advertisements;
2. Signed contracts and subcontracts;
3. Documentation of solicitations of bids from SEDs;
4. Copies of Requests for Proposals;
5. Records of telephone quotations;
6. Established set-aside contracts (if previously outlined in the contractor's SED plan);
7. Adequate and timely notice for encouraging SED participation; and
8. Proof that the assistance of State Agencies was solicited, including:
Office of Equal Opportunity, Public Contract Assistance and Environmental Equity
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
PO Box 402
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0402
Division for the Development of Small Businesses and Women Businesses and Minority
Businesses
New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission
PO Box 835
1 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0835

(b) Where the project sponsor determines that a contractor has failed or is failing to meet the 10 percent SED utilization requirement, the contractor shall, upon the written request of the project sponsor, submit the documents specified in (a) above.

(c) The Office shall summarize in writing its evaluation of the reason given for noncompliance and the efforts made by the project sponsor or contractor to comply with its plan for achieving the 10 percent SED utilization requirement. The Office shall take into consideration good faith efforts made by the project sponsor or contractor to meet the goal to achieve the ten percent SED utilization requirement. These findings shall be submitted to the Department and, in the case of a Trust loan, to the Trust who, in conjunction with the Office, shall determine the nature and extent of the project sponsor's or contractor's noncompliance.

7:22-9.14 Penalties

Whenever a project sponsor or a contractor has failed to comply with the requirements of this subchapter, including the 10 percent requirement for SED utilization, the Department, or the Department and the Trust, in the case of a Trust loan recipient, may withhold all of the loan or grant money, or a portion thereof, and may take any of the other actions or combinations thereof specified in N.J.A.C. 7:22-3.40 through 3.44, 7:22-4.40 through 4.44, 7:22-6.40 through 6.44 and 7:22A-1.8 through 1.13 which are remedies for noncompliance with any of the conditions of a loan or grant.

7:22-9.15 Administrative hearings

(a) The Department and, in the case of a Trust loan, the Trust, shall make a determination regarding all disputes arising under this subchapter. The project sponsor shall specifically detail in writing the basis for its dispute. The Department and/or the Trust shall produce a decision in writing and mail or otherwise furnish a copy thereof to the project sponsor.

(b) A project sponsor may request an administrative hearing within 20 days of receipt of a decision by the Department and/or the Trust. The request for a hearing shall be sent to the Office of Legal Affairs, ATTENTION: Adjudicatory Hearing Requests, Department of Environmental Protection, PO Box 402, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0402. The request for an administrative hearing shall specify in detail the basis for the appeal. Administrative hearings shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-1 et seq. and the Uniform Administrative Procedure Rules, N.J.A.C. 1:1.

(c) Following receipt of a request for a hearing pursuant to (b) above, the Department and/or the Trust may attempt to settle the dispute by conducting such proceedings, meetings and conferences as deemed appropriate.

7:22-9.16 Severability

If any of the provisions of this subchapter are found to be invalid, the remainder of the provisions of this subchapter shall not be affected thereby.